

AT THE HEART OF COMMUNICATION

DEFINING & GIVING MEANING TO EVERYTHING HUMANS DO

by Sandy McGennis and Sarah Eyer
MSDB Outreach Consultants

"Communication is at the heart of everything human beings do; it defines and gives meaning to our emotions, beliefs, hopes, creativity, and life experiences. Without communication, a child is lost"

California Department of Education, 1999

Communication between infants and their caregivers is essential for two reasons. First communication develops emotional bonds between children and their caregivers. Second, children acquire language as a result of the early conversations that take place with their caregivers. It is through these interactions that children discern the underlying rules of the language used by the adults in their lives (Schirmer, 2001).

What are the communication options available? The following definitions are the most common communication and teaching methods.

Auditory-Oral

The Auditory-Oral method of teaching spoken language stresses the use of amplified residual hearing (through hearing aids or a cochlear implant), speech and oral language development. Some programs utilize a multi-sensory approach (hearing, vision, touch) while others use a unisensory approach without the benefit of speech reading. Both approaches teach children to talk through listening without utilizing a formal sign system. It also places emphasis on speech reading and visual clues from the face or body.

Auditory-Verbal

The Auditory-Verbal method much like the auditory-oral method, relies on the principle that children with any degree of hearing loss deserve the opportunity to learn to listen and talk in the mainstream community. Parents and Auditory-verbal therapists conduct Auditory-Verbal therapy jointly. Emphasis is placed on learning to listen without the use of speech reading or a sign system. It encourages spoken communication development in play.

American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL is a complex, visual gestural-spatial language in which placement, movement and expression of the hands, face and body are actually a part of the language. Its grammar and syntax are distinct from English. ASL is the native language of the Deaf Culture.

Cued Speech

Cued Speech is designed to clarify speech reading by using simple hand movements (cues) around the face to indicate the exact pronunciation of any spoken word. Since many spoken words look exactly alike on the mouth (e.g., pan, man), cues allow the child to see the differences between them.

Bilingual Approach

Bilingualism is the knowledge and regular use of two languages: American Sign Language and English. The Bi/Bi approach to the education of deaf children is based on educational models, extensively tried and tested by bilingual schools that offer French or other language immersion programs. Such programs have been found to be highly successful and have withstood the tests of time.

Pidgin Signed English

A visual sign system using many ASL signs in English word order. However, often many words are not signed (a, the, an, to etc.) as well as English word endings (-ed, -ing, -ment, -tion, etc.) are not signed. PSE is often used by teachers and is generally easier and faster to learn and use than ASL.

Conceptually Accurate Signed English

This communication style used conceptually accurate signs in English word order. Signs are based on American Sign Language.

Total Communication

Total Communication was first defined as a philosophy, which included use of any or all modes of communication (i.e., speech, sign language, audition, speech reading, and finger spelling). This philosophy led to the formation of manual systems (e.g., Signing Exact English, Signed English) that represent spoken English. Today, the term Total Communication is commonly interpreted as Simultaneous Communication (signing while talking).

Signed English

Signed English Systems (e.g., Signing Exact English, SEE II, Signed English) use signs, finger spelling, and gestures separately or in combination to represent spoken English.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD WITH A HEARING LOSS

- ~ Get your child's attention before beginning a conversation. Touch the child's shoulder, say their name, stand close. This will keep you from having to repeat yourself so often.
- ~ Always face the child with a hearing loss when you are speaking to them and don't speak to them from another room. A child with a hearing loss needs to see your face and mouth to speech read.
- ~ Exaggeration of mouth movements for speech reading will do more to confuse the child than help. Try to speak in a relaxed manner.
- ~ Remember a beard or a mustache will make it difficult for a deaf/hard of hearing child to speech read. Chewing on pencils, reading from a book if held in front of your face, biting nails, etc interferes with speech reading.
- ~ Do not have the light behind you as you speak (light from a window or a lamp). This makes it difficult to speech read. It is best if the child is looking away from the light. Avoid shadows falling on the speaker's face.
- ~ Keep background noise to a minimum as much as possible in your home. This is very important to a child with a hearing loss who is trying to listen to a conversation. So, turn off the radio, TV, stereo, vacuum and any other small appliances that make noise while you are talking to your child.
- ~ Write jobs, directions, family rules, messages, etc. on a dry erase board or posted on a bulletin board in your home. This gives the child with a hearing loss additional access to information (visual as well as auditory).
- ~ Remember a child with a hearing loss may experience an additional hearing loss due to a cold or upper respiratory infection. Be alert to this if your child is ill.
- ~ A brief explanation of an out-of-the-ordinary event (e.g., doctor's appointment, or a babysitter coming to the house) which is scheduled to take place during the day, will prepare a child with a hearing loss to enter the situation with more ease.
- ~ Laugh, sing, dance, play, read to your child, cue your child to sounds in their environment, (e.g., birds, emergency vehicles, the timer on the microwave, the telephone ringing the doorbell, a barking dog) and smile!



SEE Workshop



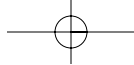
SEE Workshop

Sign classes are held in different areas of the state. Some are sponsored by the MT Association of the Deaf, community colleges, public schools with deaf and hard of hearing students, MSDB and colleges and universities. The signing method varies from ASL to SEE.

Signing Exact English workshops with instructors from around the country have been co-sponsored by MSDB. They have been held for the last five years in Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Missoula, and Billings. These workshops are designed for individuals interested in learning SEE and to help those already using SEE to improve their expressive and receptive signing skills. Intensive work is done in groups from beginner to advanced levels. Participants will improve their vocabulary, fluency, and expressiveness. They will review SEE vocabulary and extensive work on additional signs, incorporating visual features of sign language, song and story telling techniques. Educational interpreters are grouped to work on vocabulary expansion, fluency, fingerspelling, expressiveness, and practicing to a variety of timed tapes. Problem solving, discussions of interpreting ethics in the educational setting and how-do-you-handle sessions also are included.

The next workshop will be held at Helena High School March 4th through the 6th. Registration and additional information is available at www.seecenter.org. A new workshop to the state will be the Learn to Talk Around the Clock Workshop. It is being facilitated by the Bozeman Public Schools and held Friday-Saturday April 1st and 2nd. It focuses on early intervention with infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. The objectives include: impact of hearing loss on the parent and the baby relationship and on the development of listening and spoken language, family centered early intervention, language signature behaviors, auditory signature behaviors and coaching as an instructional method for parents.





“CAN WE TALK!”

DEFINING & INTERPRETING COMMUNICATION

by Kiira DeVries



There are many different ways that people communicate. There are also many different ways that people interpret the word communication. I will be writing about Webster's definitions for communication. I will also be giving my interpretation of communication and how different individuals communicate, as well as how I communicate.

The word communication has many different meanings. The word may seem simple, but it is something that has been vital to people in the past, that is vital to people in the present, and will be vital to people in the future.

One of Webster's definitions explains communication as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.” This exchange of information using symbols, signs, or behavior is an example of how the deaf and the blind use communication. Deaf individuals can use sign language to communicate and interact with others. Blind individuals can use Braille to communicate and interact with others. Webster's definition about how people use communication through “a common system of signs and behavior” is a good example of sign language.



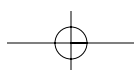
Kiira DeVries

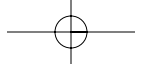
Another of Webster's definitions about the use of symbols for communicating is a good example of Braille.

How does communication apply to me? There are many different tools and symbols that I use to communicate. The symbols that I use to communicate with are called Braille. This system helps me learn information that I need to be a successful student. Other forms of communication that I use are tools that help me verbally. Some of

these tools are talking computers, a Type N' Speak, a Braille N' Speak, and a scanner that reads important printed information. The written and verbal communication that is provided for me, and other students like me, is very important because we need the interaction with each other and our surroundings.

Communication plays a very important part in everyone's lives. It is vital to communicate verbally, using symbols, using sign, or using technology. We can't survive in this world without communication. Misunderstandings come from not communicating with each other. So, what is communication? When it comes right down to it, communication is the process of giving and receiving information from people. Communication is about more than just a person, it is about the interaction among people.





“NINE QUESTIONS”

ABOUT COMMUNICATION FOR KOLBY FRASER

1. How long have you used Morse Code for written communication at MSDB?

I have used Morse Code for about 9 years.

2. How does Morse Code work with a computer?

I have to have Easy Keys and I use dits and dahs with switches.

3. What kind of computer did you use to learn Morse Code?

I first learned Morse Code on an Apple II GS. It was hard to move.

4. Who taught you to use Morse Code?

Mrs. Getten my old language teacher.



Kolby Fraser

5. Do you remember the first “written” activity you completed using Morse Code and a computer?

I remember using it for writing letters in Morse code.

6. When did you get your portable PC laptop?

I got it so many years ago I can't remember.

7. How does the PC laptop differ from the Apple II GS?

I can do more with a laptop like using email.

8. What “new” programs have you learned to use this school year?

Word pad and email with Outlook.

9. What programs would you like to learn to use in the coming months and years?

I want to learn the internet.

THE SCOOP ON LEARNING WEEKENDS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE UPCOMING EVENTS

LEARNING WEEKEND

For Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

This summer the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind will be offering four very unique programs. The Learning Weekend for families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children is a creative program that provides opportunities for families of sensory impaired children to learn about, deafness, share their experiences with other families, and learn how to communicate more fully with each other in a warm, caring atmosphere. This will be held **June 3rd through the 5th.**

This will be our 9th Learning Weekend. At each of our previous Learning Weekends we have had more than 100 participants including parents, professionals, all ages of children both deaf



H.I. Family Learning Weekend

and hard of hearing and their siblings. In addition to the wealth of information that was presented by audiologists, computer specialists, transition specialists, speech therapists, teachers of the deaf, assistive technology, specialists and parents; participants especially benefited from



“Love in Any Language

interacting with each other. Therefore, your presence at this weekend will help ensure that it continues to be a valuable experience for

everyone involved.

The focus of the weekend is to enhance each individual's personal knowledge of deafness and how it relates to the education and development of their child. Information in the form of informal workshops, group discussions (parent groups, kids groups, siblings groups, etc.) and hands-on activities will be offered. Childcare and recreation for the children (siblings included) will also be available at no charge.

Quotes from the Learning Weekend for Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children:

“I learned something new everyday – even after attending five previous family weekends”

“I was very impressed with MSDB in general. I had no idea that this was such “a gem” Montana is very lucky”.

“The staff is absolutely incredible”.

LEARNING WEEKEND

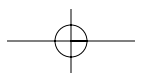
For Families of Blind and Visually Impaired Children

The Family Learning Weekend is a creative program designed to be both informative and empowering for families. The Learning Weekend provides opportunities for families to share about blindness and visual impairment, share their experiences with other families, and communicate with one another in a warm and caring atmosphere. This weekend will be held **June 10th through June 12th.**

This will be our 5th Family Learning Weekend for the visually impaired. Our target audience includes parents, professionals and children of all ages; both blind and visually impaired, and their siblings. A wealth of information will be presented by various specialists in the field to include technology, and computer specialists, transition

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...The Scoop on Learning Weekendscontinued from page 5

specialists, teachers of the blind, orientation and mobility specialists, and most importantly - parents. It is our hope that all participants will benefit from this opportunity of getting to know one another and sharing their ideas and experiences. Therefore, your attendance will enhance the



VI Family Learning Weekend

experience for everyone. The weekend format will be very similar to the Learning Weekend for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children.

Quotes from the Learning Weekend for Families of Blind and Visually Impaired Children:

"I loved everything!"

"The associations with other parents and the suggestions & ideas offered"

"It is great for the whole family something for everyone!"

"All of us look forward to FLW all year"



SUMMER CAMPS

At the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind offers two separate but unique summer camps. The programs target communication, social interaction, independent living skills and use of technology for students between the ages of 9-14 (7 and 8 year-olds will be considered on a case by case basis for the deaf camp only) who had hearing



VI Summer Camp

impairments or deafness, and the ages of 9-16 who had blindness or visual impairments. The week-long programs provide room, board and entertainment at no cost to the student. Transportation to and from the program is reimbursed at state rates. This year, the Summer Deaf Camp

will be held June 19-25 and the Summer Skills Program for the Blind will be held July 17-23. In addition to the above, structured leisure and recreational activities are provided. This includes such activities as outdoor activities, swimming, shopping, Great Falls White Sox baseball games, etc. The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind has a complete recreation

complex and the community of Great Falls provides a variety of tour sites such as the Charles M. Russell Museum, the Air Museum at



VI Summer Camp

Malmstrom Air Force Base, Giant Springs Hatchery, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and the Paris Gibson Art Museum. The summer programs provide an effective and enjoyable opportunity for deaf, hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired students to improve competence in independent living skills and to expand socialization opportunities with other students with similar impairments.

Quotes from the Summer Deaf Camp:

"I liked going swimming, participated in many fun activities, hearing jokes and staying up late"

"I really liked bowling, movies, roller-skating, swimming and all the fun at deaf camp "

"I liked the water slide and being with my friends"

"Going on trips because you can get to know new cool things"

Quotes from the Summer Skills Program – Blind Camp:

"My favorite activity was cooking French toast".

"Everything because I love to learn new things"

"I liked everything about summer vacation camp"

"I am glad I met kids and people that are just like me"

This year's camp will be held July 17-23, 2005

This summer, as in the past thirteen summers, Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Foundation have co-sponsored summer programs at MSDB. If you would like additional information on these programs please contact MSDB at (406) 771-6000 or jkelly@msdb.mt.gov



calendar



january

february

march

april

may

june

july

august

september

october

november

december

2005 Upcoming Events

APRIL

- 4-8 IOWA Tests
- 8 Prom
- 22 Arbor Day Program

MAY

- 6 Travel home for Mother's Day
- 9 Travel Return
- 13-14 VI Games
- 21 Graduation
- 27 Awards, Last Day, Early Out

JUNE

- 3-5 Family Learning Weekend for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- 10-12 Family Learning Weekend for the Visually Impaired
- 19-25 Deaf Camp

JULY

- 17-23 Blind Camp

EXPRESSIONS OF SILENCE

Expressions of Silence is a performing group comprised of sixth through twelfth graders who perform to songs using sign language and dance. The goal of the group is to provide the students with an opportunity to increase their self-esteem, travel (throughout Montana to perform for various groups), learn new songs, signs, and various choreography. They practice diligently throughout the school year to make each performance a memorable event for those fortunate enough to attend.

Expressions of Silence has had a busy year so far. We have had a variety of holiday performances which included the Christmas Stroll, the Exchange Club, and the Great Falls Public Schools Christmas Luncheon.

We also went to Helena twice in January. We performed on January 3rd for Governor Schweitzer's inauguration and again on January 17th for the Legislature. We were very honored to have been invited to perform for both of these events. The kids did a great job, and, as always, the audience was moved to tears.

Expressions of Silence is currently practicing



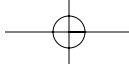
for three upcoming performances. The first will be on March 1st. We have been invited to perform with the Great Falls Public Schools during Music In Our Schools Month (MIOSM). Choirs from all of the middle and high schools will be performing. The next performance will be on April 10th at MSDB for which EOS members are currently selling fundraising tickets which include a spaghetti dinner and performance. Tickets to the event are \$5.00 for

individuals or \$20.00 for a family of 6. The dinner begins at 4:30 and will be followed by the performance. The money raised from the fundraiser will be used to pay for hotel rooms for our trip to Billings, April 14-15. We will have 3 performances in Billings on April 14th and then a performance in Red Lodge on April 15th. While in Billings we will be performing for the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) conference and at Rose Park Elementary School.

All of the students involved with Expressions of Silence have worked hard this year and we are very proud of them. They are wonderful ambassadors for MSDB!



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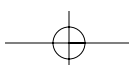
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Deaf & Blind Children in Montana



MONTANA SCHOOL *for the* DEAF & BLIND



MSDB Express

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CAPTIONING SYSTEM A BIG HIT

WITH A LEARNING CURVE THROWN IN

This year, MSDB, has piloted a real-time captioning option for our mainstreamed students. Real-time captioning requires two laptops. One is for the interpreter, dubbed "captioner", and one is for the student. The laptops are connected through a wireless peer to peer network. This enables the captioner and the student to sit in different locations in the classroom according to teacher/captioner preference. On the captioner's laptop, is a program called, Dragon Naturally Speaking. This is a voice recognition program that has been trained to the captioner's voice. The captioner repeats what the instructor is saying into a microphone cup and as they speak, the text appears on their screen as well as the student's screen. The student watches the screen in order to see what the teacher is saying. In this way, the teacher is being captioned in real-time.

Of course, no system is without glitches. Training time for

the laptop, the captioner, and the student is needed. Sometimes, even with training, the computer misidentifies words, sometimes with unexpected results that cause all parties to wince or grin! One of the nicest side benefits is that classroom lectures can be saved and shared with the student as notes.

In addition to training time, it is important to look at two other areas. One is course content. This system is best used with lecture based classes such as history, health, and others rather than visual classes such as math. The other area is the student's reading ability. As reading would be the primary mode of accessing the classroom curriculum, it would be essential that the student have good reading skills and the ability to track not only the instructor but the words on the screen. Tutoring sessions are available to discuss and practice new vocabulary and ensure comprehension of the content.



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